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RECEIVED

OCT 18 2001

October 16, 2001

Carol Hanlon
US Department of Energy
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office
M/S 025
PO Box 30307
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307

Dr. Ms. Hanlon:

We have reviewed the Department of Energy's Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation and other recently released documents that outline the Department's scientific safety case. We believe that the Yucca Mountain Project has reached the point where the Department must begin to address impacts that the Project will cause if a decision is made to proceed. At this point in time the Department has yet to adequately define its plans for addressing transportation impacts and both real and perceived economic and social impacts. Esmeralda County is not presently prepared to serve as a transportation corridor to Yucca Mountain. Public health and safety issues from transportation can be mitigated, but will require extensive planning and resources. The unique needs of rural Nevada communities affected by a "highly funneled" transportation campaign must be addressed through a mitigation process far more detailed and elaborate than currently envisioned under section 180 (c) of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act as Amended.

The large volume of radioactive material that would be shipped over the dangerous infrastructure (the Goldfield "critical curve") creates a high-risk situation. The emergency radio communication system in Esmeralda County is old, limited and without a backup system. There are a number of locations throughout the county and particularly on DOE's proposed route, US 95, where it is impossible to communicate with the central station. In addition, the County's emergency response personnel are not adequately trained or equipped to handle emergencies involving spent nuclear fuel.

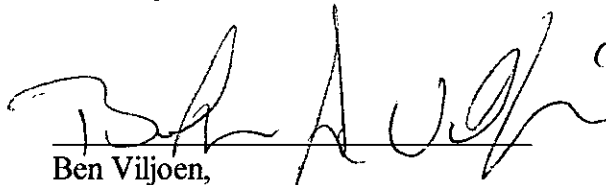
Perhaps even more onerous are the various economic and social impacts associated with the repository program. Many of these are based on perceived risks as well as actual risks, but this doesn't lessen the very real impact on our community.

Included in this category are stigma-induced impacts on tourism, property values and the economy in general. The issue is, by its very nature, very disruptive to the political cohesion of the community. Put simply, Yucca Mountain is a very controversial issue and there is considerable difference of opinion among residents. There are significant, albeit difficult to quantify, costs associated with the political and social disruption caused by this issue.

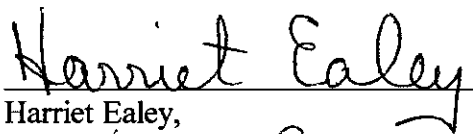
The Department has not conducted the necessary transportation planning work required for Esmeralda County to fully define the scope of impacts. In order for Esmeralda County to determine mitigation measures and costs fully and accurately, detailed transportation planning must commence immediately. The policies developed from this planning process will allow us to better understand the impacts of the Yucca Mountain Project.

We look forward to working with the Department in the development of transportation policy and impact mitigation designed to protect public health, the economy, the environment of Esmeralda County and the County as a whole. Please provide a detailed and specific response to the ideas expressed in this letter. Thank you.

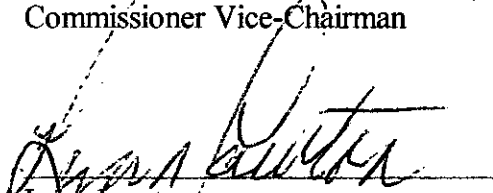
Sincerely,



Ben Viljoen,
Commissioner Chairman



Harriet Ealey,
Commissioner Vice-Chairman



Lynn Lawton,
Commissioner